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Spirits from the Past When Tragedy Strikes

By DEBORA BABIN KATZ

Paranormal experts define a "ghost" as the life force of a person who has died but still roams the mortal realm. Often haunted places are where an atrocious murder, unintentional death, or suicide has occurred and the victim's spirit still remains at that site. Duxbury has its share of places where tragic deaths have occurred, but not



The ghostly cellar of the Sun Tavern.

all of them become haunted by ghosts. Two historic places, however, stand out as sites where an occurrence of a suicide led to reports of paranormal activity.

Along Tremont Street, there is more to Sarie Booy's 18th Century house than original woodwork. It was once haunted by a spirit whose presence so frightened the owner and her son, she decided to undergo a six-month renovation project to rid the historical house of its unwanted resident.

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"This is ridiculous I said to myself. I can't be afraid of my own house," recalled Booy who practices Feng Shui, the ancient art of spatial design. She had an upstairs bedroom with its low ceilings and bad light -- along with bad karma -- changed by raising the ceiling, adding a skylight, repairing the floor, and painting the room white. "It was a serious renovation; and there was a lot of banging and noise over six months, which I think made our ghost leave," she said.

One recommendation paranormal experts and psychics often make to those trying to rid themselves of a spirit is to remodel and redecorate the space the ghost occupies most often. "As soon as the site ceases to be familiar, the phantom is likely to leave," noted author Haden Blackman in his book, *The Field Guide to North American Hauntings*.

Booy's renovated bedroom closet also leads to a "hidden" entrance onto an interior balcony in the living room. Its raised ceiling, balcony, wood paneling, and hand-lead glass windows were later additions created by a Cambridge architect who owned the house. The floor is made from a single teak log, Booy said. The space is also where residents have often encountered the spirit.

A former owner's teenage son fell asleep on a couch here and awoke to a woman rocking herself in the chair across from him. He soon realized she was not mortal, but a phantom.

"I never saw an apparition myself, but my husband's son, Tom Cavers, had an encounter with the ghost when he was small," noted Booy.

Sarie Booy moved into the

historical house after marrying David Cavers whose son was then eleven years old. The young boy awoke one night to find the ghost hovering over him. Another time he became so frightened by the spirit, Booy found him outside wrapped in a blanket, she said.

"The impact of living in a haunted house can be detected in children," said Blackman who described the obvious signs children display as bad, recurring dreams, or "a deep, and abiding fear of certain rooms." Booy noted that the spirit's presence was always felt in the older part of the house. "It was there that the apparitions took place," she said.

I found a hand-written note by Dorothy Wentworth, Duxbury's former town historian, in some paperwork the family kept on the house. "A woman -- a Kennedy, gave the place a French air. She hanged herself over the balcony rail and haunts house now."

The source of this information is unclear, and may have been an oral account given to Wentworth by a former owner or Duxbury resident. "I was told there was an opera singer who stayed in the house and hung herself either in the garage or living room," added Booy.

According to deed research, a woman named Edith Forbes Kennedy did purchase the house with her husband Albert Kennedy in 1922. They were from New York City and most likely used the house as a summer residence. In 1934, Albert sold the house after his wife's death. Perhaps, the spirit of Edith Kennedy chose to stay in her summerhouse until Sarie Booy had the foresight to make significant changes and rid the family of this negative energy.

The Sun Tavern on Con-

gress Street, however, may still have its spirit, which has haunted the place since the day a former resident killed himself there. In 1928, Lysander Walker, also known as

Duxbury's last hermit, died in the front part of the Cape Cod, built in 1741. Downhearted after his wife's death, Walker decided never again to leave his house. He always hung an American flag outside the front

door, and placed a white flag out a window to signal when he needed supplies from the neighbors.

One day, a young girl on her way to school noticed some-

thing odd outside of Walker's house. The American flag was upside down. Like most children, she thought she should let him know his mistake so she entered the house and found Lysander Walker 'asleep' with a revolver in his hand. Walker's death was so publicized it made the Boston Herald in an article titled, "Last Duxbury Hermit." His tragic death also led to some strange and unexplainable events after the house became a full service, successful restaurant.

The first eatery began with Mary Hackett, a friend of Father Francis Keagan who purchased the place for a summer residence after Lysander's death. At his suggestion, Mary began a small restaurant in the house. There are no public reports of paranormal activity during her ownership.



Current owner of the Sun Tavern, Kevin Dubois, has not experienced anything out of the ordinary yet.

Photo by Debora Katz

Then in 1964, David Wells purchased the business from Hackett. He renamed the restaurant, Fiddler's Green to give it a pub feel, he said. "He also put the house on the map for he claimed it was inhabited by the ghost of Lsyander Walker," noted Margery MacMillan in her book *Stopping Places*

Along Duxbury Roads.

Wells experienced strange incidents during his ownership. Every night at closing time, he would extinguish the candles on the tables only to find one re-lit again. (Two prior employees during the restaurant's Chart House ownership also spoke of a candle re-lighting itself at closing time during an interview.)

Another incident occurred in the cellar stairwell when David was putting away supplies. "Carton after carton came tumbling down on me" as if someone were throwing them, he noted.

It was not until Duxbury Police responded to an alarm going off at the Fiddler's Green that the locals began to believe the restaurant was surely haunted by a ghost. I tracked down retired Police Sergeant, Richard Bayramshin, who was one of the officers responding to the alarm that night. When he and another police officer arrived, they found "no forceable entry" yet the alarm was going off and they could hear noises inside.

"We called David Wells who had a key to open the place, and went in through the front door," noted Bayramshin. They searched the building, but found nothing. The strangest thing occurred when they went to lock up the place. As they locked the front door, they heard footsteps running up the stairwell located just inside the front entrance. They immediately reopened the door, but found nothing. After an even more thorough search of the premises, they locked up only to hear the running footsteps again. Another search proved futile.

"Then as we were standing outside the parking lot getting ready to leave, we heard banging noises, like someone was hitting pots and pans together in the kitchen," said Bayramshin.

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They reentered the building, and called for back up. "We searched from head to toe, there were several of us, and because there are so many small open spaces, it would be impossible for anyone to sneak around without one of us noticing," he said. After finding nothing, they locked up the place.

"We left shaking our heads. David was glad to go home and not go back in there," he added. In his 32 years on the force, Bayramshin said he has never experienced anything like it.

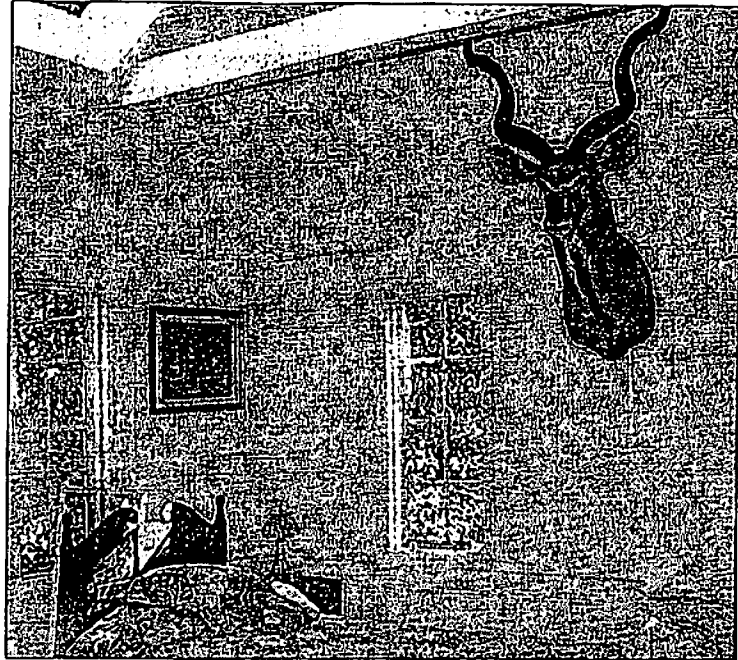
"Something unexplainable took place; I thought someone was pulling our chain, but we never found anyone," said Bayramshin. David Wells was never teased again about his ghost.

The Chart House eventually purchased the Fiddler's Green. During its ownership, the spirit of Lysander continued to play his tricks on employees. Phil and Patty Fontaine, who both worked during the Chart House ownership, experienced paranormal activity there.

"I was often in charge of closing the restaurant and had candles that re-lit themselves after I blew them out; and when I shut off the music behind the bar it would often turn back on by itself," recalled Phil Fontaine.

He described "one crazy episode" when he and a manager opened the restaurant. "When we entered the building, the front door shut, the lights flickered on, and as we turned to go back out the door, we found the door locked." The front door at the time had a padlock so it could only be locked with a key from the other side, noted Fontaine.

Patty Fontaine described a day when she felt a sudden



The renovated bedroom which rid the Booy-Cavers family of their ghost.

Photo by Debora Katz

"cold, clammy feeling that made my hair stand up as I was going up the front stairs." Sudden changes in temperature and cold spots are often reported in haunted places. "Temperature fluctuations are usually the first sign of spectral manifestation," noted Blackman.

Another time when they were alone in the building, it became suddenly chilled even though it was warm outside. "It got really cold inside and I became scared and thought 'I've got to get out of here.' It's the only time I really had that feeling of being scared," noted Patty Fontaine.

Some visitors and employees to the restaurant recalled the feeling of someone watching them in the upstairs bathroom. "It is interesting to note that in the majority of haunted houses, some sort of supernatural phenomenon is reported to occur in the bathroom," said Blackman.

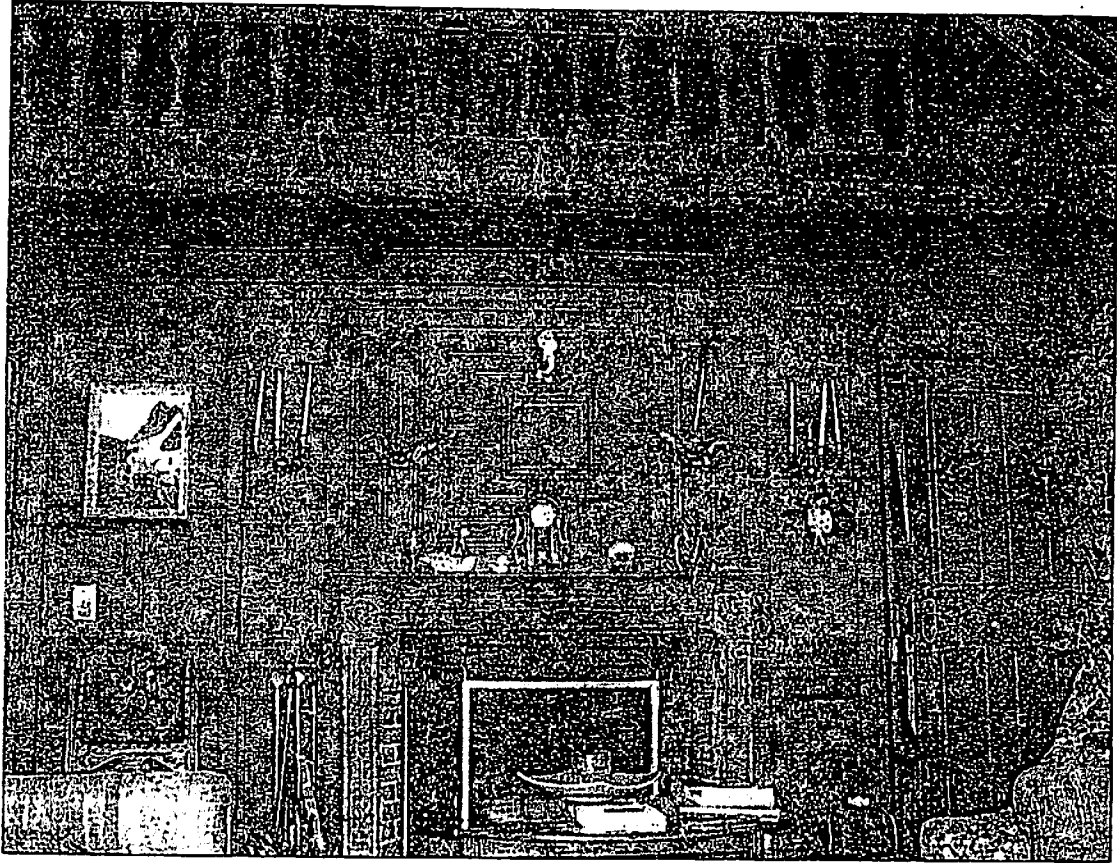
Another unusual thing about this bathroom is what former owner, Larry Friedman, found in its ceiling. According to the restaurant's current

owner, Kevin Dubois, an oil painting of a man was located above its ceiling, and the matching gold frame found in the upstairs office's ceiling. The portrait now hangs in the restaurant's waiting area.

One night a psychic came for dinner and told Friedman his ghost was outside greeting everyone. "Friedman asked the psychic what the ghost looked liked, and she responded, 'you already know, it's the man in the portrait in the front parlor,'" recounted Dubois.

Is the painting Lysander Walker, and does his spirit still roam the building where he committed suicide? I asked Dubois if he has experienced anything out of the ordinary since purchasing The Sun Tavern. "No," he said, "but I always make sure to leave with the last employee each night."

Note to Reader: I look forward to seeing you at my lecture on "Ghosts of Duxbury" at the King Caesar Bar'n on Saturday, October 27th at 4 pm. Next week, we visit a house where a psychic assisted the family in an exorcism.



The living room balcony of Sarie Booy's historical house where a former owner reportedly hung herself.

Photo by Debora Katz



This Tremont Street house was once 'haunted' by a female ghost.

Photo by Debora Katz